

**Title 6--DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Division 10--Commissioner of Higher Education
Chapter 2--Student Financial Assistance Program**

PROPOSED AMENDMENT

6 CSR 10-2.190 A+ Scholarship Program. The commissioner is amending sections (1) – (4).

PURPOSE: These amendments define an A+ designated high school and an eligible program, and add references to these terms throughout the rule for clarification; clarify the definition of federal sources of funding; remove the reference to statutory eligibility criteria and add the two statutory criteria not previously included; clarify the three-year attendance requirement; add the ability for high schools to include Missouri Constitution Project participation in a student' record of good citizenship; and add a disbursement and delivery policy.

(1) Definitions.

(B) A+ designated high school shall mean a high school that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has determined meets the requirements established in section 160.545, RSMo and has been approved by the Board of Education for participation in the A+ Program.

[(B)](C) A+ Scholarship shall mean the tuition reimbursement program set forth in subsections 7. through 9. of section 160.545, RSMo.

[(C)](D) A+ tuition reimbursement shall mean an amount of money paid by the state of Missouri to a qualified student under the A+ Scholarship for costs related to tuition, general fees, and up to fifty percent (50%) of book costs, subject to state appropriations, after federal sources of funding have been applied.

[(D)](E) Award year shall be from July 1 of any year through June 30 of the following year.

[(E)](F) CBHE shall mean the Coordinating Board for Higher Education created by section 173.005.2, RSMo.

[(F)](G) Department shall mean the Department of Higher Education created by section 173.005.1, RSMo.

(H) Eligible program shall mean a program offered by a participating A+ institution that leads to a certificate or degree, and that meets federal Title IV financial aid requirements as provided in 34 CFR 668.8 or that is pre-requisite for a program meeting that federal regulation.

[(G)](I) Federal sources of funding shall mean grant funds made available directly to students by the federal government and shall not include any funds that must be repaid, **campus-based aid**, or work-study funds.

[(H)](J) Full-time student shall mean a student who, regardless of the course delivery method, is enrolled in **an eligible program in** at least twelve (12) semester hours, eight (8) quarter hours, twenty-four (24) clock hours per week, or the equivalent in another measurement system for the fall and spring terms or at least six (6) semester hours, twenty-four (24) clock hours per week, or the equivalent in another measurement system for the summer term. If the institution in which the student is enrolled defines full-time as greater than any of these hourly thresholds for the program in which the student is enrolled, the institutional definition of full-time supersedes this definition. Provided, however, that an otherwise eligible student having a disability as defined by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101–12213) who, because of the student's disability, is unable to satisfy the statutory minimum requirements for full-time status under federal student financial aid programs included in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 shall be considered to be enrolled full-time while carrying a minimum of six (6) credit hours or their equivalent at the approved institution.

[(I)](K) Good-faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition reimbursement shall mean, by the deadline established by the department, being eligible to receive federal Title IV student financial aid and having completed the federal need-based aid application form as prescribed by the United States Department of Education (USDE), commonly known as the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), except—

1. For students whose parents refuse to provide financial information, the application form must, at a minimum, include the dependent student's financial information; or

2. For students attending institutions that do not participate in the federal Title IV student financial aid programs and are therefore ineligible for federal Title IV student financial aid, completion of the predictor tool for federal Title IV student financial aid eligibility approved by the USDE, commonly known as the FAFSA4caster, is acceptable; or

3. For students in other circumstances the department may determine completion of the predictor tool for federal Title IV student financial aid eligibility approved by the USDE, commonly known as the FAFSA4caster, is acceptable.

[(J)](L) Initial recipient shall mean a student who qualifies under subsection 7. of section 160.545, RSMo, and this rule, and who has made a good-faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition reimbursement, and has not received A+ tuition reimbursement in any prior award year.

[(K)](M) Participating institution shall mean a Missouri public community college, a public vocational or technical school, or a two- (2-) year private vocational or technical school meeting the requirements set forth in subsection 9. of section 160.545, RSMo, that has entered into a participation agreement for the A+ Scholarship program with the department.

[(L)](N) Partnership shall mean a written agreement between two (2) or more institutions, at least one (1) of which must be an A+ participating institution, providing for the processing and delivery of A+ tuition reimbursement.

[(M)](O) Positive net disbursement shall mean the sum of all disbursements for a term less the sum of all funds returned for that term resulting in a difference that is greater than zero (0).

[(N)](P) Renewal recipient shall mean a student who received A+ tuition reimbursement, or whose A+ award was reduced to zero upon application of federal sources of funding, in a prior award year, qualifies under subsection 7. of section 160.545, RSMo, and who has made a good faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition reimbursement.

~~[(O)]~~**(Q)** Repeat coursework shall be any coursework for which the student has been assigned a grade under the institution's standard grading policy, excluding coursework for which the student was placed in an incomplete or withdrawn status, in a previous term.

~~[(P)]~~**(R)** Tuition and fees shall mean any charges to students classified as tuition and any institutional fees charged to all students, excluding program-specific fees.

~~[(Q)]~~**(S)** USDE shall mean the United States Department of Education.

(2) Responsibilities of Participating Institutions.

(B) Participating institutions shall meet the following requirements:

1. Before requesting reimbursement for an initial recipient, verify the following:

A. The student has met the eligibility requirements listed in section (3) of this rule through collection of a high school transcript bearing the official A+ seal;

B. The student has met the cumulative grade point average (CGPA), satisfactory academic progress, and completion requirements referenced in paragraphs (3)(A)~~[/12/13.–/13/14.;~~

C. The student is enrolled as a full-time student **in an eligible program**, except as provided in subsection (1)~~[(H)]~~**(J)** of this rule; and

D. The student has made a good-faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition reimbursement, except as provided in subsection (1)~~[(I)]~~**(K)** of this rule;

2. Before requesting reimbursement for a renewal recipient, verify the following:

A. The student is enrolled as a full-time student **in an eligible program**, except as provided in subsection (1)~~[(H)]~~**(J)** of this rule;

B. The student has met the cumulative grade point average (CGPA), satisfactory academic progress, and completion requirements referenced in paragraphs (3)(B)2.–3. of this rule; and

C. The student has made a good-faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition, except as provided in subsection (1)~~[(I)]~~**(K)** of this rule;

3. Comply with the institutional responsibilities required in section 6 CSR 10-2.140(5), with the exception of paragraph 6 CSR 10-2.140(5)(A)5.; and

4. Verify federal sources of funding are applied correctly to tuition, general fees, and up to fifty percent (50%) of book costs as specified in subsection (4)(N) of this rule.

(C) Partnerships must comply with the following:

1. Reimbursement will only be made to A+ participating institutions;

2. Reimbursement will only be made for coursework **required for an eligible program and** actually delivered by a participating institution;

3. Reimbursement may be requested by only one (1) participating institution as specified in the agreement and must be at a tuition rate consistent with the rate charged to other students enrolled in the course;

4. When a partnership includes only one (1) A+ participating institution, the student must be considered to be enrolled full time at the participating institution;

5. When two (2) or more A+ participating institutions are involved in a partnership, students must be enrolled in sufficient hours at a combination of the participating institutions to be considered to be enrolled full time as defined in this rule; and

6. Institutions entering into partnerships must provide to the department any requested documentation pertaining to the processing and delivery of A+ tuition reimbursements.

(3) Eligibility Policy.

(A) To qualify for A+ tuition reimbursement, an initial recipient must meet the following criteria:

1. *[Meet the requirements set forth in subsection 7 of section 160.545, RSMo]* **Attend an A+ designated high school or high schools for at least three (3) years immediately prior to graduation. Enrollment at all A+ designated high schools attended during the three (3) year period immediately prior to the student's graduation must total a minimum of eighty percent (80%) of the instructional days required by the high school from which the student graduates. Interruptions in enrollment cumulatively totaling no more than twenty percent (20%) of instructional days in the three (3) year period may occur consecutively or intermittently;**

2. Make a good faith effort to first secure all available federal sources of funding that could be applied to the A+ Scholarship reimbursement;

*[2]***3.** Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident;

*[3]***4.** Enter into a written agreement with the A+ designated high school prior to high school graduation;

*[4]***5.** Graduate from an A+ designated high school with an overall grade point average of at least two and one-half (2.5) on a four-point (4.0) scale, or the equivalent on another scale;

*[5]***6.** Have at least a ninety-five percent (95%) attendance record overall for grades nine through twelve (9–12);

*[6]***7.** Have performed fifty (50) hours of unpaid tutoring or mentoring, of which up to twenty-five percent (25%) may include job shadowing, prior to high school graduation, except—

A. When there are circumstances beyond a student's control, the high school may extend the time period for completing this requirement on a case-by-case basis, not to exceed six (6) months beyond high school graduation;

*[7]***8.** Beginning with the high school senior class of 2015, meet one (1) of the following indicators of college preparedness, unless the A+ school district has met all of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's requirements for waiver of the Algebra I end-of-course exam for the recipient:

A. Have achieved a score of proficient or advanced on the official Algebra I end-of-course exam, or a higher level DESE approved end-of-course exam in the field of mathematics; or

B. Meet other criteria established by the CBHE. The CBHE will develop these criteria in consultation with participating A+ institutions and *[designated]* A+ **designated** high schools and may revise these criteria annually;

*[8]***9.** Have maintained a record of good citizenship and avoidance of the unlawful use of drugs and/or alcohol while in grades nine through twelve (9–12). **Student participation in the Constitution Project of Missouri may be included in a student's record of good citizenship in accordance with the A+ designated high school's policy;**

*[9]***10.** Be admitted as a regular student, *[and]* enroll in **an eligible program**, and attend on a full-time basis a participating institution, except that students in the following circumstances may be enrolled less than full time:

A. The student is enrolled in all of the available hours applicable to the student's program of study in a given term;

B. The student is participating in a required internship; or

C. The student is enrolled in prerequisite courses that do not require full-time enrollment;

*[10]***11.** Not be enrolled or intend to use the award to enroll in a course of study leading to a degree in theology or divinity;

*[11]***12.** Not have a criminal record preventing receipt of federal Title IV student financial aid;

[12]**13.** Meet the institution's definition of satisfactory academic progress as determined by the participating institution's policies as applied to other students at the participating institution receiving assistance under federal Title IV student financial aid programs, with the exception of cumulative grade point average (CGPA). The student must achieve a minimum CGPA of two (2.0) on a four-point (4.0) scale, or the equivalent on another scale, at the end of the fall semester for semester-based programs, or at the end of the initial payment period for non-semester based programs. The calculation of CGPA shall be based on the participating institution's policies as applied to other students in similar circumstances; and

[13]**14.** For students that receive a positive net disbursement in a given term, maintain eligibility by meeting the following course completion standards. A course is considered complete if the student earns a standard grade for the course, including a failing grade but excluding a grade at withdrawal prior to completion:

A. Complete a minimum of twelve (12) semester credit hours in the fall or spring semester, six (6) credit hours in the summer term, or the equivalent, for students enrolled full-time in *[a]***an eligible** credit hour program. Students unable to satisfy the statutory minimum requirements for full-time status under the federal Title IV student financial aid programs as a result of a disability as defined by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act must complete a minimum of six (6) credit hours, or the equivalent, in any term;

B. Complete a minimum of ninety (90) percent of the clock hours required for the federal payment period, for students enrolled full-time in *[a]***an eligible** clock hour program; or

C. Complete all of the hours in which the student is enrol in a given term, for students enrolled less than full-time in accordance with subparagraphs (3)(A)*[9]***10.A.–C.** of this rule.

(B) To qualify for tuition reimbursement under the A+ Scholarship program, a renewal recipient must meet the following criteria:

1. Be admitted as a regular student, *[and]*enroll in **an eligible program**, and attend on a full-time basis a participating institution, except that students in the following circumstances may be enrolled less than full time:

A. The student is enrolled in all of the available hours applicable to the student's program of study in a given term;

B. The student is participating in a required internship; or

C. The student is enrolled in prerequisite courses that do not require full-time enrollment;

2. Meet the institution's definition of satisfactory academic progress as determined by the participating institution's policies as applied to other students at the participating institution receiving assistance under federal Title IV student financial aid programs, with the exception of cumulative grade point average (CGPA). The student must achieve a minimum CGPA of two and one-half (2.5) on a four-point (4.0) scale, or the equivalent on another scale. The calculation of CGPA shall be based on the participating institution's policies as applied to other students in similar circumstances;

3. For students that receive a positive net disbursement in a given term, maintain eligibility by meeting the following course completion standards. A course is considered complete if the student earns a standard grade for the course, including a failing grade but excluding a grade at withdrawal prior to completion.

A. Complete a minimum of twelve (12) semester credit hours in the fall or spring semester, six (6) credit hours in the summer term, or the equivalent, for students enrolled full-time in a credit hour program. Students unable to satisfy the statutory minimum requirements for full-time status under the federal Title IV student financial aid programs as a result of a disability as defined by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act must complete a minimum of six (6) credit hours, or the equivalent, in any term;

B. Complete a minimum of ninety (90) percent of the clock hours required for the federal payment period, for students enrolled full-time in a clock hour program; or

C. Complete all of the hours in which the student is enrolled in a given term, for students enrolled less than full-time in accordance with subparagraphs (3)(A)/9/10.A.–C. of this rule; and

4. Make a good-faith effort to secure all federal sources of funding that could be applied to tuition before the award is disbursed but no later than the deadline established by the CBHE.

(4) Award Policy.

(C) Student eligibility for the A+ Scholarship expires at the earliest of the following, except a student who is eligible at the beginning of a term may receive A+ tuition reimbursement for the full term in which the expiration criterion is met:

1. Forty-eight (48) months after high school graduation as documented on the high school transcript;

2. Receipt of an associate's degree; or

3. Completion of one hundred five percent (105%) of the hours required for the **eligible** program in which the student is currently enrolled.

A. For a student seeking a first certificate or degree, calculation of the one hundred five percent (105%) shall include:

(I) All known hours completed at any participating A+ institution, including those earned as part of coursework designated as remedial or developmental **or included in an ineligible program**; and

(II) All hours accepted in transfer by an A+ participating institution from an institution that is ineligible for A+ participation.

B. For a student seeking a first certificate or degree, calculation of the one hundred five percent (105%) shall not include:

(I) Postsecondary hours earned for work performed before high school graduation. Such hours shall include, but not be limited to, those earned through dual credit, dual enrollment, technical education articulation, Advanced Placement, or international baccalaureate programs; and

(II) Hours earned at a postsecondary institution that is ineligible for A+ participation that are not accepted in transfer by an A+ participating institution.

C. For a student who has received a postsecondary certificate and enrolls in *[a]***an eligible** program leading to a related, higher-level certificate or degree, calculation of the one hundred five percent (105%) shall include:

(I) All hours that are applied toward the related, higher-level program; and

(II) All known hours completed after receipt of the most recent certificate at any participating A+ institution, including those earned as part of coursework designated as remedial or developmental **or included in an ineligible program**; and

(III) All hours completed after receipt of the most recent credential that are accepted in transfer from an institution that is ineligible for A+ participation.

D. For a student who has received a postsecondary certificate and enrolls in a program leading to a related, higher-level certificate or degree, calculation of the one hundred five percent (105%) shall not include:

(I) Postsecondary hours earned for work performed before high school graduation. Such hours shall include, but not be limited to, those earned through dual credit, dual enrollment, technical education articulation, Advanced Placement, or international baccalaureate programs; and

(II) All hours that are not applied toward the related, higher-level program; and

(III) All hours completed at an institution that is ineligible for A+ participation after receipt of the most recent certificate that are not accepted in transfer by an A+ participating institution.

(E) For a student concurrently seeking more than one (1) certificate or degree **in more than one (1) eligible program**, reimbursement will be made to, and the calculation of the one hundred five percent (105%) eligibility limit will be made by, the institution providing the highest outcome, unless the student provides written notification specifying otherwise to all institutions in which the student is enrolled.

(F) Reimbursement will be as specified for the following categories of coursework **required for an eligible program**:

1. Completed coursework for which a grade is assigned under the institution's standard grading policy, including remedial coursework and coursework assigned a grade of Incomplete, and that is required by the institution for the completion of a certificate or degree will be reimbursed;

2. Coursework from which the student officially or unofficially withdrew will be reimbursed, provided the withdrawal results in failure to meet the requirements defined in paragraph (3)(A)/13/14. or (3)(B)3. of this rule;

3. Coursework for which a standard grade was not assigned, including, but not limited to, the following is not eligible for reimbursement:

A. Coursework from which the student officially or unofficially withdrew, provided the student continues to meet the requirements defined in paragraph (3)(A)/13/14. or (3)(B)3. of this rule; or

B. Coursework from which the student was terminated;

4. Institutions can use any of the following options to adjust a student's award amount to exclude coursework that is not eligible for reimbursement:

A. Deduct the amount reimbursed for such coursework from subsequent reimbursement requests;

B. Omit such coursework from the current reimbursement request; or

C. Return the amount reimbursed for such coursework in accordance with subsection 6 CSR 10-2.140(5)(C);

5. Repeat coursework will not be reimbursed; and

6. Coursework **in an eligible program** that is part of a higher level certificate or a degree that is taken after receipt of a certificate will be reimbursed provided that the certificate or degree is in a field related to the original certificate received.

(G) For a student that fully establishes eligibility by meeting the criteria established for that student's graduating high school class in accordance with subparagraph (3)(A)/7/8.B. of this rule, reimbursement may be made for the term in which the student meets the criteria provided the student has established such eligibility prior to the institution's submission of the reimbursement request to the department.

(Q) A student who has been denied A+ tuition reimbursement for failing to meet the requirements defined in paragraphs (3)(A)/13/14. or (3)(B)3. of this rule may not receive another A+ tuition reimbursement until the enrollment period after the student successfully completes the remaining number of credit or clock hours required for the term in which the student lost eligibility.

(R) No A+ tuition reimbursement will be made retroactive to a previous award year. An A+ tuition reimbursement will be made retroactive to a previous semester or payment period only upon the sole discretion of the department.

(S) A+ tuition reimbursement will be made only after institutional certification of the student's eligibility and the amount of the A+ tuition reimbursement.

(T) The applicant's award will be sent to the approved institution to be delivered to the student's account. The institution shall retain the portion of the award that the student owes for expenses and promptly give the applicant any remaining funds.

[(T)](U) An eligible student's failure to provide required information by the established deadlines may result in loss of the A+ Scholarship for the period covered by the deadline.

[(U)](V) The CBHE has the discretion to withhold payments of any A+ tuition reimbursements after initiating an inquiry into the eligibility or continued eligibility of a student or into the participation status of an institution.

[(V)](W) An eligible student may transfer the A+ Scholarship from one (1) participating institution to another without losing eligibility for assistance, but the department shall make any necessary adjustments in the amount of the award.

AUTHORITY: section 160.545, RSMo Supp. 2015 and Executive Order 10-16, dated January 29, 2010. Original rule filed Feb. 17, 2011, effective Oct. 30, 2011. Amended: Filed Dec. 13, 2012, effective June 30, 2013. Amended: Filed Sept. 15, 2014, effective March 30, 2015. Amended: Filed Feb. 16, 2016, effective July 30, 2016. Amended: Filed Sept. 14, 2016*

**Original authority: 160.545, RSMo 1993, amended 2002, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2014, 2015.*

PUBLIC COST: This proposed amendment will not cost state agencies or political subdivisions more than five hundred dollars (\$500) in the aggregate.

PRIVATE COST: This proposed amendment will not cost private entities more than five hundred dollars (\$500) in the aggregate.

*NOTICE TO SUBMIT COMMENTS: Anyone may file a statement in support of or in opposition to this proposed amendment with Kelli Reed, Missouri Department of Higher Education, P.O. Box 1469, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1469 or kelli.reed@dhe.mo.gov. To be considered, comments must be received within thirty (30) days after publication of this notice in the **Missouri Register**. No public hearing is scheduled.*